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ABSTRACT

This project report describes the participation of South Mountain Community College (SMCC), in Phoenix, Arizona, in the Ford Foundation's Urban Community Colleges Transfer Opportunities Program, and the activities developed at the college to guide students from the beginning of their college careers at SMCC through their transfer and retention at a four-year college or university. After providing background on the college and its clientele, the project overview outlines the three components of the program: (1) the College Orientation Program, a week-long program for entering transfer-oriented students which introduces key administrators and facilities and provides instruction in note-taking and test-taking; (2) the Mentor Program, which seeks to provide selected students with intensive and personalized support from faculty members during an entire semester; and (3) the University Orientation Program, a university course taught at SMCC, which covers topics including student motivation and goal setting, language facility, study and test-taking skills, and university resources and procedures. The next sections describe achievements to date in the three programs, highlighting the responsibilities of project staff, recruitment procedures, the range of activities undertaken by faculty mentors, and completion rates. After discussing the extent to which project objectives have been achieved, the paper discusses ways in which each of the program components have been modified and institutionalized at SMCC. (HB)

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URBAN COMMUNITY COLLEGES TRANSFER OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM

FORD FOUNDATION

South Mountain Community College
Phoenix, Arizona

PROJECT REPORT

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JC 850 131

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Project Overview

South Mountain Community College is one of the seven Maricopa Community Colleges serving the greater Phoenix metropolitan area. The college was founded by the District Governing Board in March 1978 and was commissioned to provide higher educational opportunities to the previously unserved minority and low-income residents of southern Phoenix. The student population is roughly 40 percent Hispanic; 40 percent black; and 20 percent Anglo, Asian, and native American. The college was fully accredited by the North Central Association in March of this year.

The college was invited to apply for the first phase of the Transfer Opportunities Program in July of 1983. We received notification in late September that we had been selected to participate. Dr. Ken Roberts and Ms. Liz Warren, the coauthors of the proposal, began planning at that time for all phases of the project to begin in the spring semester. Ms. Elizabeth Medrano, the project's administrative aide, was hired in November. Ms. Medrano was employed on a half-time basis and is responsible for the scheduling of events, communicating with program participants, and maintaining records related to the project. The first major phase of the project began in January, the second in February, and the final one began in mid-May. We had our site evaluation in early April.

The project consists of three major components, which are meant to guide students from the beginning of their college careers at a community college to their transfer and retention at a four-year college or university. The College Orientation Program was designed to prepare them for the demands that will be placed on them at the community college. Participants in this phase included new students and students who were coming to the 100-level transfer courses from our basic skills program. The Mentor Program matched third- or fourth-semester students with a faculty mentor who explored, with them, both career and academic

goals. The University Orientation Program focused on an Arizona State University course, "University Adjustment and Survival," which was taught by an ASU faculty member on South Mountain's campus.

Achievements to Date

College Orientation

The college orientation phase of the project began in early January of this year. To select students for this phase of the project, Dr. Roberts, Ms. Warren, and Ms. Medrano reviewed applications submitted by new students who planned to enroll at the college during the spring semester. After some discussion, three criteria were developed which guided the review of the applications: "transfer-related" major, full-time attendance, and plans to transfer to a college or university. Using these criteria, an initial pool of participants was identified. Placement test scores were then reviewed in an effort to identify those students in the pool who qualified for 100-level transfer courses.

Concurrent with the review of new student application forms and placement test scores, faculty members teaching in the college's basic skills program were contacted and asked to identify those students who would be moving to transfer-level course work in the spring semester. Faculty members were asked to recommend basic skills students who had expressed an interest in transferring to a university, who had demonstrated appropriate attendance and persistence behaviors, and who had mastered their competencies of the basic skills program. We then contacted the students in the pool to determine their availability and willingness to participate. Through this process, 25 students were selected to participate in the College Orientation Program.

Ms. Lorraine Calbow, a counseling faculty member, was contracted to develop the college orientation course in consultation with Dr. Roberts and Ms. Warren. Jointly, we reviewed our course bank, which contains a listing of all courses that are approved to be offered by the community colleges in the Maricopa district. We identified CO 100 "Personal Development," a one-credit course, as one which would suit our needs. We made minor modifications to the existing course outline and identified appropriate activities and resource personnel to be included. As Ms. Calbow developed the course, she was also counseling the students selected for the course about their registration for the spring semester.

The CO 100 course was offered in a one-week format prior to the beginning of the spring semester. The class met from 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. each day. Students were introduced to key administrative personnel, including the college president and the deans. Two full-time faculty members, Dr. Julie Bertch and Dr. Richard Morales, participated in the note-taking and test-taking portions of the course. Dr. Bertch taught these segments, and Dr. Morales volunteered his lecture style for students to practice on. Students also received tours of campus facilities, including the library, the registration office, the financial aid office, various campus labs, and the administrative building. Time was also spent in the college career center and the computer lab. A cognitive style assessment and interpretation was presented during the course, which provided students the opportunity to evaluate and discuss their personal learning styles. At the conclusion of this course, students completed an evaluation form. Of the 22 students enrolled in the course, 21 completed the course and earned one college credit for their participation. Of the 21 course completers, 20 completed the semester. This reflects a significant increase over the normal retention rate of new students at the college.

Though there has not been extensive tracking of the students participating in the college orientation course, we have observed several significant behaviors. Students were frequently observed studying together on campus; they seemed to be more comfortable with members of the faculty and administration than other students; and they established a strong network that could be used to rapidly inform and remind students of scheduled events. Although this was not one of our original goals, it became important for us to encourage this networking and was definitely a positive by-product of this course. Tracking of these students will continue during the coming academic year. Those college orientation students continuing their education at South Mountain Community College will be invited to participate in some form of a mentor program next semester.

Mentor Program

During the first week of the spring semester, efforts were focused upon the Mentor Program. This phase of the project was designed to provide selected students with intensive and personalized support from faculty members during the entire spring semester. The Mentor Program did not include a set of prescribed activities that faculty members and students would have to follow, rather the Mentor Program contained some generalized guidelines that were intended to provide global direction to faculty members and participating students. During the first week of the semester, Dr. Roberts, Ms. Warren, and Ms. Medrano met individually with each faculty member to explain the nature of the Mentor Program and to identify those faculty members who would like to serve as mentors. Faculty members were informed of the general guidelines of the Mentor Program during this initial visit. They were advised that as mentors, they would be expected to work with one to five students. The mentoring relationship would be one semester in duration and would involve weekly contact with the students. It was stressed

that the mentor did not have to be teaching in the content areas related to the students' transfer majors. Prospective mentors were told that the basic thrust of the Mentor Program was for faculty members to serve as resource persons to students and to provide support that was appropriate and relevant. They were given a list of suggested activities that included reviewing the students' transcripts to determine transferability of course work and to complete academic program planning; to plan field trips to the university or to various private sector locations; to discuss majors and career fields; to review, with students, the academic demands that would be placed on them once they transferred to the university; and to allow students to have a significant amount of input into the nature and direction of the mentoring activity. In addition, all faculty members were asked to recommend students who they felt would benefit from the Mentor Program. A total of 12 faculty members indicated interest in serving as mentors to selected students. In addition to the faculty members, two administrators were also mentors.

Concurrent with the recruitment of faculty members, Dr. Roberts, Ms. Warren, and Ms. Medrano visited all 200-level class sections and explained the Mentor Program in an attempt to recruit students who had transfer plans. Students were selected for this phase of the project if they had transfer goals, had been enrolled at the college for at least two semesters, and were enrolled in transfer-level course work. Once a list of potential students was developed, it was reviewed by the full-time faculty members. Faculty members were asked to help select those students who had demonstrated appropriate classroom behaviors, who had maintained at least a "C" grade average, and who would likely benefit from the close association with a faculty member. A total of 28 students were selected to participate in the Mentor Program during the spring semester. Of the 28 students participating in the Mentor Program, 26 successfully completed the spring semester. Students and faculty members had the opportunity to select the person they would like to work with during

the semester. This process was effective, as all student and faculty preferences were met.

The Mentor Program resulted in a rich mix of activities which were planned to meet the needs of the students and reflected the global interactive style of the faculty members. Mr. Duane Brickner, a business faculty member, served as a mentor to two students who had indicated prelaw to be their major. Mr. Brickner took his students on a number of field trips to investment companies, to small businesses, and to Arizona State University. He frequently treated his students to lunches off campus, where he discussed career options and related academic programs. With one student, he provided extensive tutoring in the area of time management techniques. Several other faculty mentors conducted activities similar in format and intent with that followed by Mr. Brickner. This pattern of individual one-on-one tutoring and discussion accompanied by field trips was a format frequently used by the mentors.

Ms. Wilma Patterson worked with three students during the semester. She chose to focus her efforts on the students' primary sources of personal support, their families. Ms. Patterson met with the families and discussed the time, emotional, and financial commitment needed to complete a four-year degree. Her goal was to help the students' families understand what was required of the students and to foster the full support of the family members.

Ms. Jackie Jaap spent much of her time working with her three students reviewing community college transcripts and matching the transcripts with various programs and degrees offered at the university. Through this process, the students were able to wisely plan their remaining community college course work to have as many courses as possible transfer directly to their chosen degree programs at the university. In addition, she arranged for her students to meet with former South Mountain Community College

students who were enrolled in course work at Arizona State University.

In addition to the individual activities that occurred between the students and the faculty mentors, several group activities were offered to the Mentor Program participants. Several group field trips to the Arizona State University campus were provided. Students also had the opportunity to visit the career planning center at the university, and several group meetings and presentations were provided for the participants. For example, Dr. Alfredo G. de los Santos, vice chancellor for educational development at the Maricopa Community College District, spoke to the students about educational planning and goal setting.

During the site visit, a large reception was scheduled for all phases of the project. Students were encouraged to bring their families or other close friends. This reception provided the site visitor with the opportunity to meet informally with students and faculty participants. In addition, this reception allowed students in all phases of the project to interact with one another and to gain a fuller understanding of the scope of the total project. The other major site-visit activity was a luncheon hosted by Dr. Jack Kinsinger, vice president for academic affairs at Arizona State University. This event provided an opportunity for the site visitor to meet a broad range of university administrators who have, in some way, pledged support to the project.

To support the wide range of Mentor Program activities, Ms. Medrano focused her activities on arranging visits for the students and faculty members participating in this phase of the project. Ms. Medrano was responsible for arranging visits, locating appropriate resources when requested by faculty members, and scheduling visits to the university campus. In addition, she conducted several tours of the registration and career planning centers at Arizona State University.

University Orientation Program

The formal portion of the University Orientation Program consisted of a course titled "University Adjustment and Survival." This course carries three hours of ASU credit and was taught on the SMCC campus by Dr. Nancy Matte, a university faculty member. The arrangements for this course were handled by Dr. Al Karnig of the office of the vice president for academic affairs. The course covers topics dealing with student motivation and goal setting, language facility, study and test-taking skills and involves an orientation to university resources and procedures. This course represents a major accomplishment, since it is not common for the university to offer their courses on community college campuses. This is the first university course to be offered at SMCC.

Students were recruited for this phase of the program in a variety of ways. During open registration, Elizabeth Medrano staffed a table and encouraged students who were planning to transfer to consider the University Orientation Program. She also visited all 200-level courses to recruit students who planned to transfer in the fall. Although the formal portion of this phase of the project was the university course, students who were interested in it were invited to attend other events, such as workshops at ASU, special university tours, and registration activities, and any on-campus events such as special speakers. Thirty-two students participated in these events; 31 successfully completed the semester. Eighteen of these students enrolled in the university orientation course, and 17 finished.

Shortly after we received notification of funding and were profiled in Time Magazine, we were contacted by Mr. Robert Zubia, ASU's department of counseling and consultation, and Dr. Arthur Carter, the associate dean of student life. Through them and the rest of the counseling and consultation staff, we have been able to plan and articulate with the university far more than we ever

expected during the first year. We have met with them on the average of every two weeks since November to plan specific activities and to discuss how our students would be received and tracked after they have transferred. They have established a paraprofessional program that trains students to be mentors to incoming transfer students. Their students have had several opportunities to meet with ours during the past semester. In future semesters, it is our hope that our transfer students will join their program and create an ongoing support system of South Mountain students at the university. They have also assisted us in the tracking of South Mountain students who are currently at the university. This tracking will continue with students from the program.

We have also received a great deal of support from Mr. George Carrillo and his office of minority recruitment at ASU. Mr. Carrillo has assigned one of his staff members to South Mountain for the purpose of assisting students with the registration and financial aid processes. This staff member spent every Friday on the SMCC campus and provided a wide range of support to students who intended to transfer to the university.

Due to the high degree of support we have received from the offices of counseling and consultation and minority recruitment, we anticipate that we will have many opportunities to expand our efforts to provide support to students once they make the decision to transfer.

Achievement of Project Objectives

Below are listed the objectives for each major phase of the project as contained in the original proposal. Following the objectives is an analysis of the achievements made related to the initial project plans.

College Orientation Program: The original intent of this phase of the program was to develop an orientation program that was two weeks in duration and would serve approximately 40 students. The orientation program was to be offered in advance of the spring semester.

1. Create an orientation course.
2. Recruit faculty members from the available faculty pool.
3. Select assessment and attitudinal instruments.
4. Develop selection criteria for students.
5. Select and recruit students.
6. Develop promotional materials.
7. Schedule all community college facilities for orientation program.
8. Arrange special counseling, financial aid assistance, and early registration for participants.
9. Offer program.

In developing and offering this phase of the project, the objectives listed have been completed. We originally intended that the program would last for two weeks; however, the course we chose, CO 100, worked better in a one-week format. Ms. Calbow, who developed the orientation course, provided us with a revised syllabus based on her experience in teaching the class. Tuition for the course was paid by the project. Ms. Calbow also researched and chose assessment and attitudinal instruments, which were, unfortunately, unavailable in time for the orientation. We also found it unnecessary to develop promotional activities, since our recruitment effort was successful. Although we had intended to serve 40 students, Ms. Calbow preferred a smaller enrollment for purposes of class cohesion. This decision seemed justified in terms of the quality of the course for the students enrolled.

Mentor Program: The major thrust of the Mentor Program was to match third- or fourth-semester students with a faculty member to do intensive career and academic exploration. We planned to serve 30 students in this phase of the project.

1. Create a mentor tracking package for faculty members participating in the program.
2. Develop selection criteria for students and faculty members.
3. Develop training activities for the faculty members who would be serving in the program.
4. Schedule and present faculty training.
5. Select students and faculty members.
6. Schedule monthly meetings of all participants.
7. Identify peer faculty links at the university.
8. Develop activities bank and local contacts for students.
9. Offer program.

The activities listed for this phase of the project have been met in spirit if not always in fact. A tracking package for faculty mentors proved itself unnecessary, when all that they really needed were transcripts and the students' current schedules. The faculty members did receive orientation/training sessions; however, no large group activities were formulated. Faculty members did seem to be more comfortable with a one-on-one approach. In addition, it is somewhat difficult to schedule meetings that everyone can attend; therefore, we individualized. The feedback that we have received from some faculty members has convinced us of the need to augment our individual meetings with written guidelines that can be consulted. For the same scheduling problem, regular monthly meetings were not held; however, there were many scheduled events for mentors and their students to attend. In addition, Dr. Roberts, Ms. Warren, and Ms. Medrano were always available for consultation on important issues. Faculty members also tended to share with one another what they were doing with their students. Given the nature and extent of

our contacts with ASU, our faculty members could conceivably have been put in contact with any university faculty peer. In most cases, our faculty members already had a contact at ASU or proceeded through university channels to get in contact with one. We found no need to develop a formal list of university peers at this point in the project.

University Orientation Program: The intent of this phase of the program was to orient students whose transfer to the university was imminent. The original plan was to recruit 40 students to participate in a two-week university orientation course. The course was to be offered by Arizona State University and taught on the South Mountain campus.

1. Expand contacts and develop support for the program from the university's administration.
2. Develop contacts for tours of university faciltiies.
3. Coordinate and schedule visits to the SMCC campus from the university's financial aid, counseling, and registration services.
4. Develop selection criteria for students.
5. Select or recruit students.
6. Develop and distribute promotional materials.
7. Select seminars on time and budget management.
8. Coordinate the teaching of the university course on the SMCC campus.
9. Offer the program.

From the initial program planning phase, we have received a high level of support from Arizona State University. Dr. Jack Kinsinger, ASU's vice president for academic affairs, was involved in the initial planning of the program and has continued to provide support and assistance as the project develops. In addition, Dr. Al Karnig, Dr. Arthur Carter, and Mr. George Carillo have been instrumental in the development of contacts at the university. Instead of bringing ASU's services to the

campus, we felt it would be more appropriate for our students to go to the university to become familiar with the university setting. As in the college orientation, promotional materials were unnecessary due to our recruitment efforts. Since seminars on time and budget management are imbedded within the university orientation course, we did not schedule separate ones. We originally planned to offer the orientation to 40 students. As in the college orientation, the instructor preferred a smaller enrollment. Of the 32 students we recruited for the course, 18 actually enrolled, and 17 finished. The students who did not enroll usually cited conflict with jobs or other responsibilities.

Changes in Program

We made no major changes in our program or in our staff. We requested a transfe of funds from our travel budget to student tuition, but in the end, this proved not to be necessary. We also requested to use the remaining funds in the budget to support the administrative aide on a full-time basis for the remainder of the semester. This also proved to be unnecessary, since she decided to return to college part time.

Institutionalization

The College Orientation Program is currently being revised by the faculty member who originally wrote and taught the course. Her aim is to develop a course structure and supporting materials so that additional sections could be offered by additional faculty members. We hope to double the size of this phase of the program in the fall semester.

The Mentor program will remain approximately the same size, since our facaulty will probably not increase significantly in size. However, we plan to institute levels within the Mentor Program so

that advanced students can serve as mentors to new students or to high school students. We also hope to have several work-study students working for the project who are or have been participants and can aid us in the establishment of a reliable student network. During the summer, we will continue to develop our contacts with feeder high schools in an effort to expand mentoring activities. We will also provide more detailed guidelines for all students and faculty members who will be serving as mentors.

The University Orientation Program should also double in size. Given the number of midyear transfers, we may decide to offer it between the fall and spring semesters. We will continue to work with paraprofessionals being trained by ASU's center for counseling and consultation and will actively urge this semester's university orientation students to join them. Next semester, we plan to be at the university one day each week, not only to be available for our former students, but to provide current students several opportunities to familiarize themselves with ASU.

As a final note to this report, we would like to provide a brief self-evaluation of the SMCC program. It is our opinion that we were able to achieve the objectives set forth in the original proposal and, in some cases, made significant additions to the project. The faculty members at the college were very supportive and enthusiastic. They contributed significant energy and a high-level of commitment in planning activities and in working with students. Likewise, students were very involved and, by midsemester, began to identify themselves as Ford students. Students who participated in the program formed strong networks with fellow students and appeared to deal more effectively with faculty members, administrators, and the normal academic bureaucracy. Our involvement with Arizona State University was extremely positive, and we felt that there was a sincere effort on their part not only to support the goals and objectives

identified in the proposal but to contribute new ideas and approaches designed to facilitate the transfer and retention of SMCC students. In addition, we were well received by Grand Canyon College, a private liberal arts institution. Several of our students will be transferring to Grand Canyon College next year and, through the project, were able to receive extensive tours of that campus and were given special advisement and counseling.

It is our feeling that students participating in all phases of the program had increased levels of commitment to academic achievement and were able to establish realistic goals. This project has resulted in a special feeling of community among the students participating.

While the project served as a model, we have identified areas that need to be strengthened and have identified several approaches that will allow us to expand the program to better serve students. We believe that the basic model developed will allow us, in coming semesters, to better serve students at the feeder high schools, to serve students enrolled at South Mountain Community College. and to serve those students transferring to four-year colleges and universities. This project has made a significant impact on the college.

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